

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 LAB-04
SIL-01 HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /040 W
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R 051230Z JUL 78
FM USLO RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 562
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, SA
SUBJECT: WOMEN WORKING IN SAUDI ARABIA

1. ON JUN 25 WILSON MORROW COMPANY, LOCATED IN RIYADH, REPORTED THAT THEY HAD BEEN VISITED BY AN INVESTIGATOR FROM THE SAG MIN LABOR ON 24 JUNE. ON 28 JUNE, FURTHER DETAILS OF WILSON MURROW'S NEGOTIATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES WITH THE MIN LABOR WERE OBTAINED BY USLO AS FOLLOWS:

2. ON 24 JUNE, MOHAMMAD SALALAH, SAG DEPARTMENT OF LABOR INVESTIGATOR VISITED WILSON MORROW COMPANY DURING THE EVENING AND REQUESTED HANK WOLBRINK, BUSINESS MANAGER, TO PROVIDE HIM WITH THE NAMES AND SPONSORS OF ALL WOMEN WHO WERE WORKING AT WILSON MORROW. MR. WOLBRINK INFORMED THE INVESTIGATOR THAT WOMEN NO LONGER WORKED FOR WILSON MORROW, THAT THEY HAD ALL BEEN TERMINATED, AND THAT HE WOULD NOT PROVIDE THEIR NAMES TO THE INVESTIGATOR. THE INVESTIGATOR THEN DEMANDED THAT MR. GEORGE SOYSTER, PROJECT MANAGER, APPEAR AT THE MIN OF LABOR THE FOLLOWING MORNING, 25 JUNE, AT 0900 HOURS. MR. SOYSTER AND MR. WOLBRINK ATTENDED A MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MIN LABOR AT THAT TIME. MR. SOYSTER WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S NAME.

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3. DURING THE MEETING, WILSON MORROW WAS REQUESTED TO SIGN THE FOLLOWING AFFADAVIT:
SUBJECT: WOMEN FORBIDDEN TO WORK
TO; DIRECTOR OF LABOR DEPARTMENT (QUOTE)
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS CIRCULAR 7/7049, DATED 27/6/98 AND A VISIT MADE BY THE INSPECTOR OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT, WE WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT WE HAVE ALREADY TERMINATED THE

SERVICES OF WOMEN IN OUR OFFICES. IN CASE WE HIRE WOMEN TO WORK
WE SHALL BE SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW. UNQUOTE.

SIGNED

4. WILSON MORROW DID NOT RECEIVE A COPY OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
EDICT CONCERNING WOMEN WORKING; HOWEVER, THEY DID RECEIVE THE
FOLLOWING CIRCULAR FROM THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS: GENERAL
HEADING: CIRCULAR TO ALL COMPANIES AND CONSULTANTS WORKING FOR THIS
MINISTRY (MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS)

TO: MANAGER, WILSON MORROW

DEAR SIR:

WE ARE IN RECEIPT OF HRH THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR LETTER NO:
10386, J.S. DATED 2-6-98, STATING THAT WOMEN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO
WORK IN ANY AREA WHICH WILL MAKE THEM MINGLE WITH MEN CONTRARY
TO THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR RELIGION AND CUSTOMS.

PLEASE SEE TO IT THAT YOU DO NOT EMPLOY WOMEN IN YOUR FIRM AND
YOU SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY VIOLATION OF THIS RULE.

BEST REGARDS,

DEPUTY MINISTER DR. NASIR SALOOM

5. AT THE SAME TIME AS THE MIN LABOR REQUESTED MR. SOYSTER TO
SIGN THE ABOVE AFFIDAVIT, THE DEPARTMENT REQUESTED THAT MR. SOYSTER
PROVIDE THE NAMES AND SPONSORS OF ALL WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN WORKING
FOR HIM AND INSTRUCT THEM TO APPEAR BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR SO THAT THE WOMEN'S SPONSORS COULD SIGN AFFIDAVITS STATING
SUBSTANTIALLY THAT THEY WOULD NOT ALLOW THEIR WIVES TO WORK
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AND THAT THEY WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. MR. SOYSTER INFORMED
THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR THAT HE WOULD PASS THE MESSAGE ON TO THE
WOMEN BUT COULD NOT INSTRUCT THEM TO GO TO THE DEPARTMENT. IN
FACT, MR. SOYSTER HAS CONTINUED TO EMPLOY THE WOMEN; HOWEVER,
HAS KEPT THEM WELL SEPARATED FROM THE PUBLIC AREAS.

6. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT TOLD MR. SOYSTER THAT
WILSON MORROW WOULD BE GIVEN A TWO WEEK GRACE PERIOD TO FIND OTHER
SECRETARIES IF MR. SOYSTER WOULD SIGN THE ABOVE AFFIDAVIT. AS OF
WEDNESDAY EVENING, MR. SOYSTER HAD NOT SIGNED THE AFFIDAVIT AND WOULD
ATTEMPT TO FURTHER DELAY SIGNING UNTIL CIRCUMSTANCES MAY FORCE
HIM TO DO SO.

7. MOTIVATION: MR. SOYSTER AND MR. WOLBRINK WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE
FIRM EVIDENCE THAT ANY ONE FACTOR CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMPANY COMING
UNDER THE SCRUTINY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR. THEY SPECULATED THAT
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING FACTORS: FIRST,
THEY HAD FIRED THREE SAUDI EMPLOYEES DURING THE WEEK PRIOR TO THE
INVESTIGATION. THEY SPECULATED THAT ONE OF THE FORMER EMPLOYEES
COULD HAVE FILED A COMPLAINT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR. SECOND,
AN EMIR, NAME UNKNOWN, FROM A VILLAGE HAD VISITED THEIR OFFICES
TO ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A ROAD FOR HIS VILLAGE. THE EMIR WAS ASKED TO

WAIT IN A SMALL WAITING ROOM UNTIL THE TECHNICAL ENGINEER HAD
RETURNED FROM AN OUTSIDE CALL. THE EMIR WAITED FOR A FEW MOMENTS
AND THEN LEFT IN A HUFF, IRATELY SAYING THAT WILSON MORROW COULD
NOT TREAT HIM LIKE A DOG, OR WORDS TO THAT EFFECT. AGAIN, IT IS
SPECULATION THAT THIS INCIDENT CONTRIBUTED TO THE INITIATION OF THE
INVESTIGATION.
GRANINGER

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Type: TE
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